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EDUCATIONAL NEWS AND EDITORIAL COMMENT

STANDARDS OF EFFICIENCY IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

In no field of school work is the need of standards of efficiency so great and the formulation of adequate standards so difficult as in English. Until recently the only available standards have been the college-entrance requirements, whose futility all have recognized. The more recent efforts to form scientific scales like the Hillegas-Thorndike and the Harvard-Newton scales for English composition have shown how difficult it is to secure workable standards for school use. The significant and hopeful fact is that English teachers themselves, who have felt free to ride any one of a dozen hobbies with no anxiety save to escape a fall when their pupils meet the barrier of college-entrance requirements, are everywhere setting themselves seriously to the task of considering what pupils should know and be able to do to meet the demands which society may reasonably make upon the pupils who have passed through their hands.

A notable example of this new attitude is found in the tentative minimum standards prepared for the Boston schools by a Committee on Standards in English, discussed in the October number of *Education* by Carolyn M. Gerrish, secretary of the committee. These standards require that a graduate of an elementary school should be able to do readily the following things: (1) to copy twelve lines of simple prose or poetry, and a bill of at least seven items; (2) to take down from dictation a passage of simple prose; (3) to write from simple directions a friendly letter or an application for a position; (4) to write within a half-hour a simple, original composition of not less than one page of letter paper, with every sentence grammatically complete (the pupil may make revisions, including interlinear corrections, but must not rewrite; in this composition the total number of serious errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation should not exceed five); (5) to recognize the parts of speech in their common uses; to explain the construction of words and phrases in a simple sentence containing not more than one phrase modifier in the subject and one phrase modifier in the predicate; to have a practical understanding of the uses to which the dependent clause of a complex sentence can be put—whether it be to serve as noun, adjective,

or adverb; to know the principal parts of regular verbs and of the common irregular verbs, and their tense forms through the indicative mood; (6) to read at sight with readiness and good expression simple prose as difficult as *Little Men* or *Hans Brinker*; (7) to quote either orally or in writing fifty lines, not necessarily consecutive, of classic prose or poetry; (8) to stand before the class and talk clearly on some subject of personal, school, or public interest.

A graduate of a high school should meet the following requirements:

A. He should have ability: (1) to write original compositions—whether they be narration, description, exposition, or simple argument—that are logically planned and so developed as to be conspicuous for unity and coherence; the spelling and grammar should be correct, and the punctuation adequate; (2) to plan coherently and give fluently a five-minute talk on some practical subject on which he has had time to think; (3) to write any common type of business or social letter with technical accuracy and with simplicity and directness; (4) to find and organize material for an original composition of one thousand words upon business, political, historical, literary, or scientific subjects; (5) to read aloud, at sight, with intelligence and clear enunciation, anything from a newspaper to a classic of ordinary difficulty; (6) to tell why a piece of literature (like a standard novel, or essay, or a lyric poem such as may be found in the *Golden Treasury*) has merit; (7) to quote either orally or in writing two hundred lines (not necessarily consecutive) of classic prose or poetry.

B. He should have a working knowledge of the course of both English and American literature, of their great names and great books, and of some of the most significant influences in history and life that have molded such literature.

C. In addition to regular prescribed work in literature, he should have read from "A List of Books for Home Reading," prepared for the Latin and high schools by the English Council, or from the College-Entrance Requirement list: 4 good books of short stories, 5 good novels, 3 good plays, 2 good biographies, 2 good books of history or travel.

These standards are the result of many months of careful preparation.

The fact that these tentative requirements are being tested before being finally adopted is an added proof of the care and of the scientific spirit of the workers. What the pupils show they can be expected to attain under fair conditions is the test of these tentative standards. What the average pupils show they can accomplish under reasonable given conditions will be the basis of the requirements eventually adopted.

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

The report of the superintendent of schools of the state of Maine,¹ which has just appeared, contains a very interesting discussion of the whole matter of college admissions and of the part played therein by the New England Board. Superintendent Payson Smith draws a sharp distinction between the practical or vocational motive which he says prompts most of the young people who seek a high-school training, and the motive of preparation for college which is often uppermost in the minds of those who discuss high-school courses. He regards the college requirements as very much more conservative than the vocational and practical demands. Furthermore, he calls attention to the fact that most of the colleges on the New England Board are ultra-conservative, private institutions. Many of them are outside of the state of Maine and are very little in touch with the practical demands that govern the development of secondary schools in that state. That these private and conservative institutions should exercise any large influence on the development of schools which are supported by the people seems to Superintendent Smith to be altogether anomalous. His final statement on the matter may be quoted (p. 55):

Ultimately, however, it would appear that in justice to all secondary-school students regardless of the courses they elect, in compliance with the reasonable demand of the public for the supervision of its own schools, as well as in the interests of the colleges themselves, there must come with a gradual readjustment of college-entrance requirements a permanent and generally recognized medium of communication between the several branches of the school system. This medium must be properly accountable to all who are interested in the schools' products.

For Maine particularly, it is necessary that every precaution be taken to conserve the interests of the small schools upon which the secondary education of so many must depend. The highest welfare of any part of the educational system of the state, whether conducted under private or public auspices, is entirely consistent with a policy of the preservation to each of its own integrity. On the proper adjustment of all the parts one to another depends finally the right development of what may well be regarded as the most serious undertaking of the people.

When this statement is taken in conjunction with the fact that the state University of Maine has broken away from the Board, and also in connection with the fact that Dartmouth College has found it impossible

¹ *Report of the State Superintendent of Public Schools of the State of Maine for the School Year Ending June 30, 1914.* Payson Smith, Superintendent. 1915. Pp. 297.

to continue as a member of the Board, it becomes evident that the restlessness which arises from lack of co-ordination between New England colleges and secondary schools has become an important factor in the development of both institutions in New England. For some time the inco-ordination of New England colleges and of western high schools has been apparent to all who have had to do with certificating students from these western schools. The reorganization of the examination system in Harvard was confessedly due in large measure to a recognition of this lack of co-ordination between Harvard's entrance requirements and the work being done by high schools in the west. It will be a matter of only a few years before the New England colleges will have to recognize that western universities and colleges keep in close touch with their secondary schools and are meeting the demands of these secondary schools by a system of admission which recognizes the growth of both institutions. This is the only rational method of uniting all of the different parts of the school system. The development of intimate relations between secondary schools and colleges has been easier in the Middle West because the great state universities have, from the outset, recognized it as their function to relate themselves to the school system. That the New England colleges will have to move in the same general direction seems apparent to any observer who is not hemmed in by the conservative influences of these institutions.

ASSOCIATION OF HIGH-SCHOOL TEACHERS OF ENGLISH OF NEW YORK CITY

The fact that in many sections of New York City English is a foreign language in the homes of the pupils makes the problem of the English teacher a peculiarly difficult one. The time given to instruction in English is three periods per week in the second and third years of the high-school course. The Association of High-School Teachers of English has made a vigorous effort to secure additional time for instruction in the subject. This finally resulted last year in securing a recommendation to the Board of Superintendents that two periods a week in the second year and one period a week in the third year be added to the course in English. The recommendation was approved by the Committee on High Schools and by the Committee on Studies and Textbooks of the Board of Education, and the item of \$80,000 to meet the additional expense was placed in the tentative budget by the Finance Committee. But stringent re-

trenchment demanded by the Board of Estimate and Apportionment, because of the European war, caused the recommendation to be set aside.

The Association has the satisfaction of feeling that the value and need of the extra time has been recognized and it is waiting for the restoration of normal conditions when it expects to gain the desired end. In the meantime it has devoted its energies to the problem of improving the effectiveness of English instruction through the co-operation of all teachers of all departments. Bulletin XVI of the Association of High-School Teachers of English of New York City, containing 59 pages, consists of the reports of ten committees on various aspects of the teaching of English, most prominent of which is the report of the Committee on Co-operation.

The following suggestions are made as standards for oral and written work in all classrooms:

In Oral Work

1. Insist on clear speaking. The student should stand erect, with head up, and speak with sufficient clearness to be understood in all parts of the room.
2. Insist on exactness. Require that the answer match the specific question asked. Do not say, "I know what you mean. It is this way." Lead him to employ words that will express his meaning with some approach to precision.
3. Insist on full answers. Resist the temptation to accept piecemeal replies. Where such a regulation is not too artificial, frequently require the pupil to explain in complete sentences what he means. Encourage the pupil so to organize his material that he can speak two or more minutes in elucidation of his ideas.
4. Insist on correctness. Do not accept "ain't" for "isn't," "don't" for "doesn't," "this here," "those sort," or similar ungrammatical or unidiomatic expressions. Be careful to secure the proper use of the tenses, especially of the present tense.

In Written Work

1. Require the uniform heading. The faculty in each school should reach an agreement concerning the heading to be required of all pupils in all their written work.
2. Insist on neatness, in both handwriting and arrangement.
3. Require correct spelling, not only of words in your subject, but of all common English words. To call attention to such errors will not be sufficient unless the pupil is made to feel that he cannot safely repeat the error.
4. Insist on clear sentence structure. Sprawling or incoherent sentences should be pointed out to the student. He will soon learn that he must exercise the same care in his other writing that the English teacher exacts in his themes.

5. Require such punctuation as will make the sentence clear at a single reading, especially the proper use of the period and the question mark. The faculty might well agree on a few of the important rules for the comma to be enforced in all writing.

6. Reject summarily all reports, papers, and notebooks obviously deficient in the elements of decent English and good form noted above.

Many other schools have set up similar minimum standards for spoken and written English. It is not too much to say that if all the teachers of any high school felt the importance of firm insistence upon some such minimum standards, the quality of the English training would be greatly improved. It might even be expected that the desired improvement in the New York schools could be secured with the present schedule. With such co-operation, many schools more favorably situated with respect to the necessity for English training might reduce the amount of time now devoted to the formal instruction in English.

SECOND PAN-AMERICAN SCIENTIFIC CONGRESS

In accordance with the resolutions of the first Pan-American Scientific Congress, held in Santiago, Chile, December 25, 1908, to January 5, 1909, a second Pan-American Scientific Congress will meet in Washington next December under the auspices of the government of the United States. The Congress will open on Monday, December 27, 1915, and adjourn on Saturday, January 8, 1916.

The organization officers are: John Barrett, LL.D., secretary-general; Glen Levin Swiggett, Ph.D., assistant secretary-general; headquarters: Pan-American Union, Washington, D.C.

There are the following nine main sections of the program of the Congress: I, Anthropology; II, Astronomy, Meteorology, and Seismology; III, Conservation of Natural Resources, Agriculture, Irrigation, and Forestry; IV, Education; V, Engineering; VI, International Law, Public Law, and Jurisprudence; VII, Mining and Metallurgy, Economic Geology, and Applied Chemistry; VIII, Public Health and Medical Science; IX, Transportation, Commerce, Finance, and Taxation.

Section IV, Education, is most comprehensively treated. The three main divisions of Public Education in a Democracy, International Education, and Technical Education subdivide into the following: Elementary, Secondary, and University Education, Education of Women, The Exchange of Professors and Students between Countries, and Engineer-

ing, Medical, Agricultural, Industrial, and Commercial Education. This section will emphasize through the character of subject-matter discussed the more purely intellectual and cultural feature of the Congress and will appeal strongly to the delegates from the Latin-American countries, many of which have made marked progress in recent years in the field of education.

The Commissioner of Education of the United States, Dr. P. P. Claxton, is chairman of this section. Dr. S. P. Capen, specialist in higher education, Bureau of Education, is vice-chairman.

Conferences on the following topics will be held by the various sub-sections:

Sub-Section 1: Elementary Education.—To what extent should elementary education be supported by local taxation, and to what extent by state taxation? What should be the determining factors in the distribution of support?

Sub-Section 2: Secondary Education.—What should be the primary and what the secondary purpose of high-school education? To what extent should courses of study in the high school be determined by the requirements for admission to college, and to what extent by the demands of industrial and civic life?

Sub-Section 3: University Education.—Should universities and colleges supported by public funds be controlled by independent and autonomous powers, or should they be controlled directly by central state authority?

Sub-Section 4: Education of Women.—To what extent is coeducation desirable in elementary schools, high schools, colleges, and universities?

Sub-Section 5: Exchange of Professors and Students between Countries.—To what extent is an exchange of students and professors between American republics desirable? What is the most effective basis for a system of exchange? What plans should be adopted in order to secure mutual recognition of technical and professional degrees by American republics?

Sub-Section 6: Engineering Education.—To what extent may college courses in engineering be profitably supplemented by practical work in the shop? To what extent may laboratory work in engineering be replaced through co-operation with industrial plants?

Sub-Section 7: Medical Education.—What preparation should be required for admission to medical schools? What should be the minimum requirements for graduation? What portion of the faculty of a medical school should be required to give full time to teaching and investigation? What instruction may best be given by physicians engaged in medical practice?

Sub-Section 8: Agricultural Education.—What preparation should be required for admission to state and national colleges of agriculture? To what extent should the courses of study in the agricultural college be theoretical and general, and to what extent practical and specific? To what extent should the curriculum of any such college be determined by local conditions?

Sub-Section 9: Industrial Education.—What should be the place of industrial education in the school system of the American republics? Should it be supported by public taxation? Should it be considered as a function of the public-school system? Should it be given in a separate system under separate control? How and to what extent may industrial schools co-operate with employers of labor?

Sub-Section 10: Commercial Education.—How can a nation prepare in the most effective manner its young men for a business career that is to be pursued at home or in a foreign country: (a) in schools that are a part of the public-school system? (b) in schools of private endowment? (c) in special business schools of private ownership?